

MEMORANDUM FOR: Ev

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This and [] memo on Contra are the result of a meeting we had with Bruce on this subject a couple of weeks ago.

Dick Lehman

cc: AC/NIC

Date 11 March 1981

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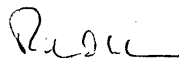
SUBJECT : Dissent

1. As you will remember, I have on occasion inveighed at planning sessions against our lack of analytic daring. At the risk of too sweeping a generalization, our system seems to work in ways that establish and enforce party lines for organizations. There are of course a number of important elements where disputation is a way of life. More often, however, division and branch leadership tends to be conservative and the pressures to produce leave little time and less enthusiasm for substantive argument. The young analyst has to live in this culture; he gets the message early that the standing branch interpretation is the only possible one. When he in turn becomes a branch or division chief he has been properly shaped to be a cog in a responsive machine. This does not mean that leaders as a general practice consciously suppress opposing views or impose their own, but rather that by doing what they think is needed to get the work out they often have that effect.

2. You often are faced with inter-office disagreements (OSR says the Soviet military are getting ready; OPA says there are a dozen reasons why they won't move), but how often do you hear of intra-office disagreements? A couple of years ago, to provide an opportunity for analysts to express such disagreements, we established Contra as a journal of substantive dissent. But Contra is starving for lack of this kind of material and it is now devoted largely to discussion of non-substantive issues. I cannot believe that NFAC is unanimous in its interpretations of all the pressing issues of the day. Intelligence evidence is rarely that unambiguous. It follows either that our analysts are too hard-pressed to find time to express their views, or that we are practicing democratic centralism at the branch or division level, or perhaps both. But if the first is true we need to make the time for them to differ, and if the second is true we need to change the approach of first-line supervisors.

3. Whichever is the case, in this problem, as in so many, the key is the branch chief. How to get the analyst's views past the branch chief without: a) ensuring that the former gets a lousy PAR, or; b) undercutting the authority of the latter, or; c) burying senior levels in muffins from the half-bakery, or; d) so entangling Gulliver in alternate hypotheses that he can't get a paper out?

4. There is no easy answer. Generating and sustaining analytic ferment can only be done by bringing about changes in deep-seated cultural patterns -- getting Greeks to love Turks. Steady pressure from you on office directors, by them on division chiefs, and by them on branch chiefs will be necessary. Beyond that, however, we can establish a "dissent channel", like that of the Foreign Service, that gives the analyst the right to forward his views to you if he disagrees with his superiors. Announcement of such a procedure would at least signal your interest in the unorthodox interpretation. Its use would have to be both encouraged and carefully monitored if it is to be anything more. Consideration might also be given to making the encouragement of substantive controversy a mandatory factor in supervisors' PARs.



Richard Lehman